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"A WISE MAN IS STRONG."

A SERMON

ON THE DEATH OF

DANIEL WEBSTER,

DELIVERED IN

TRINITY CHURCH, WASHINGTON, D. C.,

NOVEMBER 7, 1852,

BY

REV. C. M. BUTLER, D. D., RECTOR.

WASHINGTON:
W. M. MORRISON & CO.
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WASHINGTON, D. C., Nov. 8, 1852.

Rev. CLEMENT M. BUTLER, D. D.

REV'D AND DEAR SIR: The undersigned having listened with sincere pleasure to the very eloquent and interesting Sermon pronounced by you on the last Sunday evening in commemoration of the eminent public and private character of the late DANIEL WEBSTER, would deeply regret that such a tribute to the memory of the illustrious deceased should be known only to the comparatively small number who were so fortunate as to hear it, and therefore respectfully ask you to furnish us with a copy for publication.

Very sincerely and respectfully yours, &c.,

MILLARD FILLMORE,
ALEX. H. H. STUART,
D. W. MIDDLETON,
A. H. LAWRENCE,
J. M. CARLISLE,
RICH'D S. COXE,
JNO. W. MAURY,
FRANCIS MARKOE,
J. C. MCGUIRE,
FITZHUGH COYLE,
J. BARTRAM NORTH.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Nov. 10, 1852.

GENTLEMEN: It was with much diffidence that I prepared the feeble tribute to the memory of Mr. WEBSTER, which it was no less my duty, than the prompting of my heart, to pay.

However much I may fear that the warm approval of my effort which your kindness prompts you to express may create a disappointment in the minds of those who shall read this Discourse, I feel it would be unbecoming in me to withhold it, when thus requested, from publication. If any words of mine, borrowing weight and worth from those who approve them, shall seem in any measure fitly to express the sorrow, gratitude, and affection for the illustrious dead which are swelling the great heart of this Republic, I shall count myself happy.

With great respect, your obedient servant,

C. M. BUTLER.

To

HIS EXCEL. MILLARD FILLMORE,
THE HON. ALEX. H. H. STUART,
D. W. MIDDLETON,
A. H. LAWRENCE,
J. M. CARLISLE,
RICH'D S. COXE,
JNO. W. MAURY,
FRANCIS MARKOE,
J. C. MCGUIRE,
FITZHUGH COYLE,
J. BARTRAM NORTH.

SERMON.

“A WISE MAN IS STRONG.”

PROV. XXIV, 5.

A wise and strong man, lately with us, has departed. The last of “the *three mighties*” is no more. DANIEL WEBSTER is no longer the name of *living* wisdom, grandeur, power. He is hidden from our eyes. The funeral rites are over. The mourning multitude who, with drooping heads and swelling hearts, attended his burial, have dispersed. The little group of chosen friends, lately gliding with suppressed, reverential, and affectionate sorrow around his bed, and through the hushed house of mourning, have all departed. The echo of the blended voices of bereaved love and affectionate eulogy, which rose above his grave, yet linger on the air. The sickness, the death, the burial, the admiring tributes paid to his memory by individuals, Cities, States, and the Nation, no longer passing in august and mournful procession before our minds, have now taken their places among the most sublime and affecting incidents of our national history. That majestic form, which we have seen so often and so recently in this house of God, has passed forever from our view. It sleeps, in the midst of a scene of solitary grandeur, by the sea. It rests in a favorite spot, where, looking out upon the ocean and the sky, he loved to meditate and drink in the

spirit of a scene so congenial to his mighty mind, in the hour of morning's freshness and of twilight's calm. It is a resting place suited to the severe and majestic simplicity of his character, his intellect, his life, his death, his burial. The sea—emblem of vastness, majesty, mystery, and power—chaunts, in fit and melancholy monotone, his perpetual requiem. As the pilgrim to his tomb shall stand upon that elevation where he sleeps, and look out upon the sea, and hear the measured music of the waves as they break upon the shore, he will see a sublimer ocean of human souls spreading before his spirit eye, and hear it rolling and breaking, in strains of sorrow, affection, admiration, and gratitude, at the base of his lofty fame.

Few men have, so well as Mr. WEBSTER, illustrated the truth, that "a wise man is strong."

The wise and foolish, in the language of Solomon, sometimes mean merely the good and the evil. Sometimes Solomon uses the word "wise" to designate exclusively intellectual sagacity and power. At other times, as in the text, he includes both meanings in the word. Very frequently he asserts that holiness—the wisdom of the heart—increases the sagacity, discretion, and power of the understanding—the wisdom of the mind. When these two wisdoms are combined, then, in the highest and best sense of the word, the man is wise.

He who in this sense is wise must be strong, and all the knowledge that he gains must increase his strength.

If we suppose the intellect of an angel to be given to a good man, and to lose nothing of its vigor and splendor by its mortal encasement, and by its union with a human soul and a human heart, we can imagine how greatly wise he would be. How would his great intellect sit, in throned supremacy, over other minds! He would see things as they are, trace their causes, perceive their connexions, run forward to their results, disentangle sophistries, hold vast details in his simultaneous conception, pierce through seemings to realities, bring and bind together severed truths; and on every field of thought, and in every department of action, make to rise amid the rubbish of the schemes and systems of the past, and the incomplete and deformed structures of the present, beautiful, symmetrical, and *complete palaces* of thought, based upon eternal truths, and fashioned after those perfect patterns in the skies, whose "builder and maker is God!" If such a being should mingle in the affairs of men, how strong would his wisdom prove in ruling the thought, and determining the conduct, of the multitudes who would be found sitting at his feet.

At a vast distance below a being such as this would be, stand the foremost men of all the world. But the supposition of such a being enables us the better to perceive in what the strength of the wise consists. In this world of uncertainty and of error, he who can best tell the multitudes, who are perplexed and suffering from past mistakes, what is

right, truth, wisdom, safety, and success, is a man of power. He is strong for good and strong against evil. God's might is with him. Every accession of knowledge will increase his own and others strength.

A great mind, enlightened by grace, and directed in its thought and work by moral and religious principle and feeling, is a precious gift from God to man. It is a great instrument of good. Its strength is inward peace, and its goings forth are beneficence. It deserves our gratitude. It awakens our just admiration. It stimulates our curious and wandering search into its structure, its action, and the hidings of its power. It rewards our study. It gives right direction to our own minds. It guides communities and nations into the ways of truth, righteousness, and peace.

Such a man *is strong in himself*. No more pitiable spectacle of weakness can be conceived than that of a human soul in doubt concerning the future, and unprepared to enter upon it with "quietness and assurance." Even if it have the mental gifts of Bolingbroke or Hume, it is a poor and feeble thing, with no peace, no power to breast present ills, and no good assurance of happiness in the future. Such a soul cannot be self-poised, calm, and strong. Its doubts are weakness; its conclusions are not strength. All uncertain of God, of the soul's immortality, of the Almighty's mode of dealing in another world—if such there be—with spirits that have sinned, how can there be confidence and rest of heart, strength of moral purpose, fixed plans and

ends in life, and a steady, cheerful, and brave doing and enduring unto the end? Or if the conclusion be reached, that beyond the present life all is blank, that the soul at death flits into non-existence, what is to come out of that black nothingness to cheer and assure the soul? Or if it conclude that God will make all his creatures happy in another world, how often will that conclusion be shaken, when reason tells him that it is not *proved*, and fear suggests that it *may not be true*, and conscience whispers that it *is false*! If he doubts, he is driven, without rudder, compass, chart, or star, over life's vexed waste of waves, he knows not whither. If he believes, then, indeed, he is anchored; but he is anchored in a dark, misty, and stormy night, by a shore from which no beacon beams, and no friendly voice of warning or direction comes; and all uncertain whether the vague and solemn sounds which reach him are the roar of the breakers on the rocks where he must perish, or the fall of the waves on the shore of the safe harbor into which he may pass in peace, he must await, in gloom and darkness, the breaking of the day. Surely this man has no inward strength!

But when a great mind is wise to seek and find out God, and secure pardon and peace in Christ, it is girded about with power. Then it is in communication with God, and draws strength from him. Uncertainty about the future is dispelled. The path of duty is made clear. The way to God's favor is disclosed. The mysteries connected with

his own personal condition are resolved. He knows, by faith, which rests on proof and promise, that all things work together for his good. His plans, his ends, his motives, are all high and inspiring. In his weakness, he knows how to obtain strength. In his darkness, he knows where to resort for light. Though there be mysteries, connected with the existence of evil and the providence of God, which he cannot comprehend, he holds in his hands the sealed solutions of these enigmas, which will be opened in heaven, and on which God has written the promise, "thou shalt know hereafter." Surely this man is strong.

A man thus endowed with great gifts of intellect, and thus at peace within, how wise he will be in the conduct of affairs, and how strong in his influence over men! He will go into life pledged and qualified to seek truth and discharge duty. He will love to promote the elevation and the happiness of man. Passion will not be allowed to pervert his judgment. Selfishness will not sway him into courses which shall promote his interests at the expense of the welfare or the happiness of others. How will men gather about, applaud, love, give themselves to one thus great and wise and good. There is nothing on which men expend so much of the affection, enthusiasm, and rapture of their nature, as upon their guides and leaders, whose gifted and powerful minds they believe to be under the sway of high, beneficent, and noble hearts. He who can give vivid expression to their thoughts and feelings, clear up

their difficulties, remove their doubts, carry them forward to new truths, speak the word that will save them in the hour of crisis, and give his highest energies to their welfare at the sacrifice of himself, wields a power such as Cæsars, with Senates at their heels, and legions at their beck, and nations on their knees before them, never can possess. It is a power, not over men's fears and stupid homage, but power *in* the soul, over its convictions, its affections, its moral judgments. It is power which dignifies alike him who exercises it and those who own its sway. It extorts an homage which elevates those from whom it comes; for they are then most truly free, when they bow lowliest before the might and majesty of beneficent greatness. It is the tribute of enlightened intellects, instructed consciences, and grateful hearts, to him who has taught and blessed them; and this tribute is evidence that, in the best sense, they have been made free; and, at the same time, one of the loftiest exhibitions of their freedom. Power over pure hearts and free minds; power to awaken the best latent or slumbering elements of man's nature, is real power. Great men, who are rich in intellect, genius, and practical wisdom, and at the same time good men, are the mightiest kings and heroes of the world. Vulgar kings lord it over man's baseness. These kings sway that in him which is freest, greatest, noblest! Such kings were WASHINGTON and WEBSTER!

That Mr. WEBSTER was, in a remarkable degree, great, wise, and strong, was universally felt and

owned. All men, of all sections, parties, and opinions, have long called him pre-eminently great. The services which he has rendered his country have made every American citizen his debtor. It is fit that, everywhere through the land, his name should be honored, his great mind studied, his character contemplated, and his services recalled. In this city, which was the scene of most of his public labors, and in this church where he worshipped, it is peculiarly becoming that a tribute to his memory should be paid. As one of the great works of God, we would study him. As one of God's best gifts to our country, we would render thanks to Heaven for him. As one whose wisdom has instructed us, and whose patriotism has rendered us inestimable services, we would pay to his memory warm tributes of gratitude, admiration, and respect. As one whom we have seen to go in and out among us—our fellow citizen and neighbor—with whom some of us have been permitted to hold official or friendly and social relations, and others to hold relations more intimate and sacred, we bend over his tomb with the swelling sorrow of a personal bereavement, to which the feeling that the most wondrous mind, and one of the most beautiful hearts that we have known, or ever expect to know, has passed away, lends a regret that might be rebellion, and grief that might be anguish, did we not believe that his spirit is at peace, and that the interrupted fellowships of the good on earth shall be resumed in heaven. It is the conviction that death does

but unfold good and great men into higher being and blessedness, and that all that was best and purest in their natures still survives to bless the world, that makes us realize that what is to us the setting of the soul, is to another hemisphere of being its refulgent rising; and it is this which soothes our sorrow as they disappear, and transmutes it into

“A holy concord, and a bright regret,
A glorious sympathy with suns that set.”

The career of Mr. WEBSTER, for the last thirty-five years, has been passed under the nation's eye. The circumstances of his childhood, youth, and early professional life, as well as the prominent incidents of his great public career, have, since his death, been vividly recalled and presented to our memories and hearts by the public press. It would therefore be superfluous for me to present a *sketch*, and it would be impossible for me to give a history, of his life.

I am aware that the attempt to analyze and describe the mental greatness of one who towered so high above his fellows as Mr. WEBSTER, may wear the aspect of presumption. But the truth is, there was nothing unintelligible, nothing mysterious or obscure, in his greatness. It was understood and felt alike by minds of very different degrees of culture and of power. It was a kind of greatness which, like that of the dome of St. Peter's, or of the Pyramids, was simple and obvious, while it was transcendent. It was not like that of a Plato or a Kant, which only minds of peculiar gifts and train-

ing can discern. Men of common powers of intellect and fancy, and of the ordinary sentiments and feelings of our nature, saw in him a man of the *same kind* with themselves—nay, they saw in him *themselves* enlarged, strengthened, ennobled, glorified!

Mr. WEBSTER was furnished with all those faculties which, in various developments and combinations, make men great. In him there was wanting no faculty which is counted an ornament or a power in the human soul. The distinguishing peculiarity of his greatness was, that not only was each faculty separately excellent, but that all were rightly proportioned, harmoniously developed, and beautifully and mutually helpful to each other. No one faculty jostled or crowded out, or covered over, another. In that fine confederated union no power rebelled against, or encroached upon, or marred either singly, or all combined; but all ministered to each other's glory and success. His power of analysis was not separated from the ability to generalize. His vivid perception of single truths did not diminish his power of viewing them in their connexions. His strong stern logic did not trample upon and crush his fancy. On the contrary, his faculties, being cultivated in due proportion, lent to each other the check or the charm they needed. His clear perception of particular truths and facts prevented rash and hasty generalization; while his fund of general principles, carefully and slowly, but surely, formed, enabled him to know whence

to trace and where to place individual facts and phenomena as they appeared. His severe taste chastened his vivid imagination. His chastened imagination hung as an ornament of grace around his neck of sinewy strength. There was often a sound of music and a wave of blazened banners in the air as his arguments moved on; but these were only the incidental accompaniments of his march; and beneath them there might ever be seen the steady movement, and heard the solid tramp, of compact and embattled power. It was this rare combination of strength and beauty, grace and power, penetration and comprehensiveness, which rendered him pre-eminent in such various fields of thought and action. It is this which makes so many, who themselves excel in the departments in which they assign to him pre-eminence, declare, that he was the first lawyer, the first orator, the first statesman, the first writer of his age.

We can but briefly speak of some of his peculiarities which made the people of this country, for years, bend forward to catch every word that issued from his lips.

He had a most extraordinary clearness of statement; his mere statement of a case has often been called a stronger argument for it, than the labored plea of most other men would be.

This arose from the fact that he would allow no vagueness in his own conceptions. What he did know, he would know clearly; or he would not consider it as truly known.

And not only had he clear conceptions in his own mind, but he would give them forth in clear expressions. He gave no utterance to half-formed thoughts, and no half-utterance to thoughts full-formed. The full thought, fully and clearly expressed—this was his rigid demand upon himself. And where shall we find sentences and thoughts in his writings which we do not comprehend? We cannot avoid understanding his statements. They stand out bold, distinct, and strong. Not of his thoughts and reasonings could it be said, as of the lion just coming from the creative power—

“Now half appeared
The tawny lion, pawing to get free
His hinder parts.”

His thoughts were lions, completely fashioned and completely free.

In view of this habit of mind, it often occurred to me to wish, when I have heard him discuss psychological questions, and speak of modern philosophies, that he could have directed more attention to these subjects, and given us his thoughts upon them. I know not that his was a mind that would have been likely to have added to this branch of knowledge; but he would, I think, have marked out the limits within which inquiry was legitimate and knowledge possible, with a nice discrimination and a steady hand. We should have been very sure that he meant something, and knew what he meant; and we should have had the great satisfaction of knowing precisely what his meaning was.

Connected with this peculiarity of clearness of conception was a singular power of condensation. Some men, such as Chalmers, make themselves understood by means of diffuseness, repetitions, definitions, cautions, limitations, and contrasts. Mr. WEBSTER studied, with unexampled success, to give clearness to single thoughts and trains of thoughts, by brief, vivid, and compact expression.

But his great power was shown in his simple, plain, and honest logic, which all men could follow, and from which no sophistry could escape. To minds of lesser powers, which had been bewildered by the complexities of another's argument, it was a matter of intense delight to follow him, as he marched right on, armed with proof, through irrelevancies and sophistries on the right hand and on the left, and took his stand on the citadel of demonstration, and planted upon it the flag of victory.

And in confirmation of the same remark I cannot but repeat the recent saying of one of his distinguished brethren at the bar, in Boston, to the effect that, as no man could argue a good cause so well, so few persons argued a bad cause worse. It was the difference between Sampson, his locks all flowing, with the gates of Gaza upon his back, and Sampson, shorn, grinding for the Philistines.

No man ever treated the minds of those whom he addressed with more real and heart-felt respect than Mr. WEBSTER. He never approached them as those who could be led by passion or deceived by sophistry. He made no appeals to their baser nature, and

took no advantage of their ignorance. He addressed them in good faith as his equals in intelligence and patriotism. He took upon himself none of the airs of a political pedagogue. He constructed the same kind of arguments, and in the same forms and phrases, for the highest and the humblest minds. His power over them was the power of truth, of fact, of reason, of right, of justice, and of conscience, whose vehicle and interpreter he aimed to be. He played no tricks before his audience or his country. He used with them no slight of hand. He never juggled them into blind and ignorant belief. He was not one of those veiled prophets, whose glory is seen only on the edges of the covering, behind which they stand hidden from the gaze of their deluded worshippers. He was open as the day.

Very remarkable, also, was Mr. WEBSTER'S power of seeing the precise points upon which an argument turned, the decisive issue that controlled a question. Often, when a great body of argument stood and blustered before him, he has known how to demolish it by a blow at its central fallacy. A single stroke upon its brain has laid it lifeless at his feet.

To these characteristics may be added the high philosophy, the pure sentiment, the religious elevation, the impassioned earnestness, the vivid and daring imagination, which signalized his higher efforts, when in some great crisis in the State, or in some moment of intense personal excitement, the whole enthusiasm, passion, and patriotism of his nature

kindled, blazed, and glowed, investing himself in radiance, and shooting convincing light and splendor over a grateful and admiring country. They who have seen this, will never see its like again!

There have been several occasions in Mr. WEBSTER's history when he has been thus roused, and in which he has shown himself pre-eminently "strong." The Constitution and the Union of the States were the objects of his intense admiration and affection. Their glory and importance were the most kindling themes which could be presented to his mind. If they were in peril, his whole nature was aroused. On two occasions—that of his reply to Mr. Hayne, and that of his speech in March, 1850—he has spoken on these topics with amazing eloquence and power.

We cannot, even now, read in our closets the words which he uttered on the first of these occasions, without feeling the eye suffused, the heart throb, and the pulses leap. What power they had at the crisis, in the scene where they were spoken, issuing warm and vivid from the kindled soul of the Orator, with tones and looks and gestures of corresponding grandeur, many remember, all have heard, none who read the history of their country will be ignorant of or forget. The rapture of admiration and gratitude which this speech awakened, the power with which it settled forever some momentous principles and questions, never have been surpassed. No one doubts that it is the greatest oration ever delivered in this country.

Many believe that it is the greatest which ever fell from the lips of man. Never has the description of the poet received a finer illustration. We feel that he who wrote it must have been in the Senate on that occasion, and written in commemoration of the scene.

“Come, and I will tell thee of a joy which the parasites of pleasure have not known,
 Though earth, air, and sea have gorged the appetites of sense.
 Behold what fire is in his eye, what fervor in his cheek;
 That glorious burst of winged words—how bound they from his tongue;
 The full expression of the mighty thought, the strong triumphant argument;
 The rush of native eloquence, resistless as Niagara;
 The keen demand, the clear reply, the fine poetic image,
 The nice analogy, the clinching fact, the metaphor bold and free,
 The grasp of concentrated intellect, wielding the omnipotence of truth,
 The grandeur of his speech in his majesty of mind!
 Champion of the right, patriot or priest, or pleader of the innocent cause;
 Upon whose lips the mystic bee hath dropped the honey of persuasion;
 Whose heart and tongue have been touched as of old by a live coal from the altar,
 How wide the spreading of thy peace! how deep the draught of thy pleasure!”

But for power—power of character, intellect, and a long life of patriotic service; power resulting from confidence in his great abilities and true patriotism, his equal justice and his large wisdom—nothing has ever equalled that which he exerted when, in an alarming crisis, he stood up to speak on the 7th of March, 1850, and the whole country

bent forward with palpitating eagerness to hear. Well may the minister of the Gospel commemorate that scene, for on the preservation of the Union the best interests of religion, no less than of liberty, depend. But I would speak of it now as an illustration of the wise man's strength. It was not a glowing and impassioned oration which he uttered then. The occasion was too grave for passion and for the play of fancy. His argument was measured, sedate, and laden with anxious care. It breathed peace and conciliation. It counselled forbearance, self-sacrifice, and patriotic devotion to the Union. It avoided the words and the allusions which excite prejudice and passion. But, in those calm words, what power! I need not remind you how they went over the land like a healthful and reviving breeze in a stifling and noxious air. I need not tell you how they awakened confidence and hope. I need not recall to your memory how they served to bind in fraternal brotherhood patriotic hearts from various parties and sections of the land, and to animate to new exertions their almost exhausted ingenuity, and their almost disheartened toil. But trace those words as they reach his home, and you will see what prodigious power the great man, in whose purity of purpose there is confidence, possesses. Those words fell on unwilling ears. They clashed with the convictions of those whom he represented. He by whom they were spoken was not their master, but their representative and servant. The strong, thoughtful,

earnest men of that region, do not give up their convictions to any or all dead or living men. Only by winning their honest belief, sentiment, and feeling to his side, could he bring these men—descendants of those who would not give up their convictions to kings when they were in their power—to set the seal of their approbation to his course. And this is what that great speech did. It went among them, and the name, the fame, the past services, the great clear mind of its author, went with it; and it spoke in a still small voice, to their reason and their heart, their patriotism and their justice, until their convictions surrendered to his words. He dedicated to them the speech with the motto, “VERA PRO GRATIS”—“true words, rather than acceptable”—and he might, in the next edition, have changed its form, and written “VERA ET GRATA,” “true *and* acceptable.” Such power few men have ever wielded; such greatness few have ever shown. These were the crises which presented him in his true and majestic proportions to the country and the world.

His grandeur he derived from Heaven alone,
 For he was great ere fortune made him so;
 And strifes, like mists that rise against the sun,
 Made him but greater seem, not greater grow.

Nor was he like those stars which only shine
 When to pale mariners they storms portend,
 He had his calmer influences, and his mien
 Did love and majesty together blend.

Such was the strength manifested by this wise man on the theatre of public life. It was not the

mere power of intellect. It was the strength of one who, in the meaning of Solomon in the text, was wise. With his great mental powers there were joined religious and moral principles and character.

I do not wish to be considered as denying that Mr. WEBSTER had his infirmities of character, and his faults and sins of life. What, and how great they were, I do not know. That they were much less and fewer than party passion and personal enmity would suggest, we may be sure. That he has been vilely slandered there can be no question. That he was ardently beloved, highly venerated, and entirely confided in by those who constituted his family circle, and those who shared his closest friendship, is well known. When those who have been intimately cognizant for years of the public and private life of an individual, entertain for him an enthusiastic reverence, and express a warm admiration for the daily moral beauty of his life, we may safely, and we *must* in justice, discredit the grossly disparaging misrepresentations of those who know and see him only at a distance. Such is the feeling and the testimony of all his nearest friends. As one who has had the privilege to hold towards him, for more than five years past, the relation of Pastor, who has been recognised by him in that relation, and called by that endearing name, and admitted to the privileges which it involves, I feel constrained to say, and I say it with emphasis and without qualification, that *I* have never *known* any thing to disprove, and *I* have known many things to

confirm these friendly representations and this feeling of reverence and regard. Whatever may have been his infirmities, they were not such, in my judgment and belief, as ever to have corrupted his moral principles, debased his character and taste, and destroyed the life of his religion. I believe that **MR. WEBSTER** was a converted and religious man; and it was this element of his character that lent a peculiar strength and beauty to his writings, his affections, his public and his private life.

In a few more words upon this point I will dismiss a subject upon which it is painful for me to speak, but upon which I also feel it would be wrong in me, considering the relations which I have sustained to him, and the kindnesses I have received from him, to be altogether silent. These attacks upon his character and the misgivings of portions of the public mind in consequence, which somewhat diminished the strength of an influence which, without some such abatement, it might have been too much for any man, with safety to his soul, to have possessed, reads a salutary lesson to public men. It shows them that no intellect, however gigantic, can sway the mind and heart of the people of this country, unless it is believed to be connected with purity of life and principle. It admonishes them, not only *to be*, but to be careful to seem, and to be seen to be, faithful and incorrupt.

And now I turn to those traits of character which were largely modified and influenced by his religious element and training, some beautiful illustra-

tions of which have been presented in the public prints. Then it will remain for me to speak of his religious character and his closing hours.

There was in Mr. WEBSTER a simple, unpretending Doric dignity of character and demeanor, which corresponded with the greatness of his mind. Not from any thing that he *assumed*, but from what he *was*, he impressed all who associated with him with reverence, and many with awe.

From this dignity and self-respect he set an example of decorum, high courtesy and forbearance in debate and in writing, which has been rarely equalled, and never surpassed. It is stated that he has never been called to order in debate.¹ He usually discussed subjects apart from the personalities in which they might be involved. He had none of the bitterness of mere party warfare. His mind seized the great principles which were involved in questions, and to them his strength was given. The editor of his writings states that he received but one injunction from Mr. WEBSTER in reference to his productions, and that was, that he should obliterate from them, if possible, every trace of party feuds and personalities; and he truly adds, that there was but little occasion for the injunction.

Another striking trait of Mr. WEBSTER, in his public and private life, was the purity of his taste, and the elevation of his moral tone. One who has long been intimate with him declares that, never in his life did he hear an impure thought or a profane expression come from his lips. And this there are

none to gainsay. In all the six large volumes of his collected works, it would be as difficult to find a passage which contains a low sentiment, an impure allusion, a light or sneering word in reference to sacred things, or any other than the loftiest and noblest principles and sentiments, as it would be to find examples of bad taste, feeble reasoning, or tawdry rhetoric. In these productions he still lives. There his real character, there his true heart, there his great and high nature, still speaks to his country and the world. All that was temporary and incidental, all that detraction whispered, and malignity surmised, is already fleeing from before a fame which will be, with posterity, as spotless as it will be transcendent.

But nothing in Mr. WEBSTER was more beautiful than his large heart, the warm and tender affectionateness of his disposition. No man ever had more ardent and tenacious affection for his kindred, his early associates, and the chosen circle of his friends. Less demonstrative of his feelings before the world than many others, with manners which in general society and common intercourse sometimes conveyed an impression of coldness, if not harshness, it is nevertheless true, that he was eminently loving and beloved within the sphere of home and of chosen friendships, and the private relations of life. Since his death, some most touching evidences of this fact have appeared. If the cabinets of his nearest friends could be opened to the public eye, they would show a wealth, a beauty, a tender-

ness, a warmth, a delicate refinement of affection, that would prove this man of the largest brain, to have been a man no less of the largest heart.

How touching that incident—you all have read it—of the hot day in July, when, a boy, he was making hay with his father; and they sat beneath the elm, on a hay cock, and his father spoke to him of his toils and want of education, and he cried; and his father promised that he should be educated. You remember how, when his father promised he should be educated, he laid his head upon his father's shoulder, and wept tears of grateful joy. How exquisite his letter to "Master Tappan," the "good old schoolmaster" of his childhood. How beautiful his tributes to the memory of his father, mother, and elder brother. How affecting the direction in his letter, so late as March of this year, to Jno. Taylor, the agent on his farm at Franklin: "*Take care to keep my mother's garden in good order.*" It was not of statesmanship and of the Presidency alone that he was thinking then. He had thoughts of his mother and of her garden; and that garden of his mother in his childhood's home, he would have kept in order, whoever might be an accepted or rejected candidate. How beautiful the dedication of his works to his chosen friends and his nearest kindred; especially that to the memory of his deceased son and daughter—

"Go, gentle spirits, to your destined rest;
While I, reversed our nature's kindlier doom,
Pour forth a father's sorrow at your tomb."

How does the beauty of that affection become sublime, when he calmly calls all his near ones around his dying bed ; and with words of affection, cheerfulness, and religious admonition, bids them a last farewell.

This affection flowed forth over a large circle of beloved friends. With them, his intercourse was marked by the most endearing courtesies and kindnesses. There was a cordiality and a genial cheerfulness in these friendships which gave them a peculiar charm. Here he let his mind recreate and play. Here it was that the beauty of his mind often came forth and gambolled over its sleeping or reposing power. Here it was that his fine fancy, of whose use he was so sparing in his public efforts, had free range. He would not allow her to go forth with his reason, lest she should beguile it, when it was occupied in the grave tasks of patriotism and duty ; but he kept her at home, by the side of his heart, that she might brighten and sing to the domestic circle. It was a delicate Ariel, whom this mighty Prospero would employ only in the service of the affections. If the memories and the cabinets of his family and friends could be thrown open, it would be seen that this man, of the largest reason and affections, was a man also of the most beautiful and playful fancy.

But on these features of his character I have too long lingered. Let me, in conclusion, speak of his religious character and his closing hours.

Mr. WEBSTER, in early life, before his removal to Boston, was a communicant in a Congregational

Orthodox Church in New Hampshire. After his removal to Boston, he attended the Unitarian Church. About ten years since he became a communicant of the Episcopal Church in this city. During the five years and a half of my residence in this city, he has been a regular attendant and communicant in this Church.

Of the entire system of religious opinions entertained by Mr. WEBSTER I have no authority to speak. But in the conversations which I have had with him on religious subjects, his sentiments on several topics have been freely expressed. His preference for the Episcopal Church rested chiefly on his admiration of its liturgy, and its general conservative character. He had no sympathy with, but rather a profound conviction of the folly of that churchmanship which stands with its face to the past, and its back to the future. He loved most that preaching which was plain, earnest, affectionate, personal, and expository, rather than that which was general and discursive. His conversation was always understood by me to proceed upon the admission, on his part, of what are called the distinctive and evangelical truths of the Gospel. I have known his most emphatic approbation to have been expressed of sermons in which these truths were most distinctly presented.

Mr. WEBSTER was exceedingly fond of discoursing and conversing on religious subjects. I never remember to have visited him, when the circumstances admitted of it, that he did not enter upon the subject. I particularly remember a call which

I made upon him on the third or fourth evening after the delivery of his great speech of the 7th of March, 1850. He was alone, and somewhat indisposed. But at once, and with great interest—apparently forgetful of public affairs, at a moment when most men would have been alive at every pore to know how their course would be responded to or approved—he entered upon a most interesting discussion of moral, philosophical, and religious questions. Among other subjects, he dwelt much on the tendency of men to rest in church, or services, or sacraments, or doctrines, or something else, for salvation and acceptance, except just that spiritual purity, and homage, and service which God demands; and he gave me a sketch of a series of sermons which might be preached from the text, “God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” One who had seen and heard him that evening, would have supposed that he was a sage and philosopher, whose interest was absorbed in these great themes. It would not have occurred to him that he was, at that moment, the most eminent of our public men, at the most critical period of his own and the nation’s life. The incident impressed me with his singular greatness.

It was my purpose, with Mr. WEBSTER’S consent and aid, to collect all that he had written and said upon the subject of religion, and present it in a volume to the world. This purpose was delayed, that he might furnish me with some of the published and manuscript productions on this subject,

which he had written in early life. His numerous duties and frequent indispositions from time to time, prevented the fulfilment of his promise to furnish me with these materials. I was led to suppose that there might be no inconsiderable amount of such material scattered in some periodicals, which were written while he was a student at law, or during the earlier years of his legal life. He mentioned an argument which he had written on the Immortality of the Soul, which I trust may be recovered.

But I must hasten to a close. Some of the incidents of his closing hours have been given to the world. They show him to have been, in death, peaceful, majestic, and resigned. From my friend, Dr. Jeffries, his attending physician, a pious member of our communion, I have received a more full detail of incidents of his dying hours than has yet appeared. They are in the highest degree interesting and pleasing. They assuage our sorrow. They confirm our hope.

From the letter I take the following :

I was assured, early in the sickness of Mr. Webster, that he understood the danger of his situation. As the disease progressed, he knew that it would be soon fatal ; and he was the first to fix upon a definite time when he should die. But he was not disposed to speak of it, as I think, because he knew it would be distressing to his friends. He *acted* on this knowledge from the earliest period of my attendance ; every thing he did had a reference to this result. I had no conversation with him on the subject of his death until it was near, and but little on serious subjects ; that little, however, showed distinctly his views on this important subject, and together with what I otherwise heard and observed, served to illustrate satisfactorily his religious character.

I have not time, at so short a notice, to explain the circumstances and incidents of his sick chamber. I, therefore, send you only a few *facts* for your consideration and use. I would observe, that his *epitaph* has not as yet been printed.

If you analyze that remarkable embodiment of his thoughts, you will find a full expression of his faith under the teachings of the spirit. His reference to the atonement you will perceive by what followed my recital of the hymn. I have no doubt that he was an experimental Christian. May we not confidently hope that he, who so often spoke with the truth and clearness of a prophet's vision, uttered under a Divine guidance those remarkable words, "I shall be to-night in life, and joy, and blessedness."

The few facts I have to present to you, are as follows :

On leaving Mr. Webster for the night at half past eleven, on Saturday, October 16, 1852, I asked him if I should repeat to him a hymn at parting, to which he gave a ready assent; when I repeated the hymn which begins

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

He gave very serious attention to the recital, and at the close he said, "Amen, amen, even so come Lord Jesus." This was uttered with great solemnity. He afterwards asked me if I remembered the verse in one of Watts' hymns on the thought of dying at the foot of the Cross, and repeated these lines, with remarkable energy and feeling :

"Should worlds conspire to drive me hence,
Moveless and firm this heart should lie,
Resolved, (for that's my last defence,)
If I must perish—*here* to die."

After this he said, that "he owed it to his fellow-countrymen to express his deep conviction of the divine inspiration of the gospel of Jesus Christ," and had embodied some thoughts which he gave to Mr. Edward Curtis.

He repeated the text, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," and then, what he had given to be inscribed upon his tombstone, which was as follows :

"Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief."

"Philosophical argument, especially that drawn from the vastness of the Universe, in comparison with the apparent insignificance of this globe, has sometimes shaken my reason for the faith which is in me ; but my heart has always assured and reassured me, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be a Divine reality.

“The Sermon on the Mount cannot be a merely human production. This belief enters into the very depth of my conscience.

“The whole history of man proves it.

“DANIEL WEBSTER.”

He afterwards said that he wished also to leave, somewhere, his testimony in favor of early piety; that he was familiar with all the great poets, Pope, Dryden, Cowper, Milton, and others, but that the hymns of *Watts*, from his cradle hymns to his version of the Psalms, and other deeper hymns, were always uppermost in his mind and on his tongue; that he could repeat them faster than four scribes could write them down.

He conveyed very strongly, by his remarks, that his early religious instruction and acquirements had always had the most profound and abiding influence upon his mind and life.

I was informed by Mrs. Webster, about a fortnight before his death, that he had been speaking to her of his case, and expressed the apprehension that it would terminate fatally; he then appeared to consider his preparation for the event, and clasping his hands he said, with deep emotion, “I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

A short time before he became unable to express his thoughts, he appeared to be engaged in silent prayer, (as I often noticed his appearance to indicate during his sickness,) when he gave utterance to something—a few words of which were low and lost by me; that which followed was, “but whatsoever I do, Almighty God, receive me to thyself for Jesus Christ’s sake.” He also exclaimed, “I shall be, to-night, in life, and joy, and blessedness.”

On Saturday, October 23d, about 8 o’clock, a. m., he requested that all in the room should leave it, except myself. He had just vomited, and was still sitting erect in the bed; I had taken the place of the person who had previously supported him at his back, and was behind him. He asked if all had left the room. I answered, “yes.” He then, in a perfectly clear and distinct voice, said, “Doctor, you have carried me through the night, and I think you will get me through the day; I shall die to-night.” This was spoken emphatically, but without any agitation, and was followed by minute directions for what he wished consequently to be done. During the day he gave particular attention to many lesser, as well as some important, matters of business.

Could I, my dear sir, have delayed this reply, I should have written much more fully, and furnished you with more of the occurrences of his sickness and death, especially a prayer which he made after executing his will; but I have time only for these few irregular remarks.

Oh, my brethren, if this strong man, in life and death, throws himself like a child on the provisions of mercy in the gospel of Jesus Christ, what shall we, in our weakness, do? What will become of *us* on a dying bed, and in the eternal world, if we live without God and die without Christ?

Receive, I pray you, the living and dying testimony of him who knew what were the wants of the greatest, equally with the humblest, of men, and has pointed out where they may be supplied. Could he speak to us, he would need but to repeat his last words on earth, to assure us how wise and well it is to trust our salvation to an Omnipotent Redeemer. He might say to us—Because of reliance on him “*I still live,*” and living, realize how poor and dim was the life of earth compared with this life of heaven. “*I still live,*” and my life is the surpassing fulfilment of the anticipation with which I passed through death, that I should be, on that night of sorrow to those whom I left behind, “in life, and joy, and blessedness.” We catch the words from his dying lips; we hear them now bursting from his glorified and enraptured spirit; and that which, dying, was his hope and strength, is our consolation, as we bend over his tomb—LIFE, JOY, BLESSEDNESS!



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